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Illegal Israeli actions in Occupied East Jerusalem and the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory

Security Council
Seventy-third year

Identical letters dated 6 March 2018 from the Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General, the President of the General Assembly and the President of the Security Council

In follow-up to my recent letter of 2 March 2018 (A/ES-10/768-S/2018/180) regarding the violations and crimes by Israel, the occupying Power, in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, I am compelled to draw your attention to the continued rise in tensions as Israel's right-wing Government persists with its oppressive, provocative and illegal decisions and measures.

Illegal Israeli settlement activities in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, the blockade and the bombardment of the Gaza Strip, the demolition and confiscation of Palestinian homes and properties, the arrest and detention of Palestinian civilians, including children, and violent military raids into Palestinian villages, towns, cities and refugee camps, causing death and injury to Palestinian civilians, continue unabated, causing further instability and deterioration of conditions on the ground.

The persistence of such actions starkly illustrates just how much Israel, the occupying Power, has been emboldened by recent developments and the ongoing lack of accountability. Before the eyes of the world, the Israeli Government has abandoned all restraint and is doing everything in its power to bury the two-State solution and any chance for a just peace, in absolute contempt of the law and the resolutions of the Security Council and General Assembly. Moreover, it persists on this reckless and ruthless path in blatant disrespect of the will of the international community as articulated in those relevant resolutions and in the numerous statements made in recent and past debates at the United Nations and other international forums.

While it is impossible to record each and every crime committed by Israeli occupying forces and terrorist settlers against the Palestinian people, listed below are just a few of the countless Israeli crimes perpetrated in the period since our previous letter of 12 February 2018 (A/ES-10/767-S/2018/113), all reflecting policies aimed at dehumanizing and denying the rights of the Palestinian civilian population, traumatizing generation after generation under this illegal occupation.

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Palestinian casualties

Lethal and indiscriminate force continues to be routinely unleashed by Israeli occupying forces against Palestinian civilians, causing wilful and wanton death and injury to innocent civilians, in grave violation of international humanitarian law and human rights law. In this regard, we must highlight the deepening vulnerability of Palestinian children, as they continue to bear the brunt of this increasingly violent and repressive occupation regime, which continues to devastate even more Palestinian families. The following are among the recent casualties caused by the Israeli occupying forces:

On 26 February 2018, occupying forces shot and killed a Palestinian teenager, Ismail Saleh Abu Reyala (age 18), and detained two other fishermen as they sailed off the coast of the northern Gaza Strip.

On 22 February 2018, a Palestinian man died while in Israeli custody shortly after being detained by occupying forces before dawn in his home in Jericho. Video footage gruesomely revealed Yassin Omar Al-Saradih (age 33) being repeatedly beaten, kicked and struck with the weapon of an Israeli soldier. The Palestinian Prisoners' Society released a statement saying that Yassin Omar Al-Saradih (age 33) was pronounced dead after suffering from seizures and being exposed to large amounts of tear gas after occupying forces reportedly heavily fired tear gas in the area during the raid.

On 19 February 2018, Israeli air strikes on the Gaza Strip killed two Palestinian teenagers, Bassam Muhammad Sabbah (age 17) and Abdullah Ayman Abu Sheikha (age 17), both from the Al-Salam neighbourhood, and another two Palestinians were injured.

On 15 February 2018, a Palestinian youth was reportedly severely beaten by a group of Israeli settlers when they raided the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound in the Old City of Occupied East Jerusalem.

Illegal blockade on the Gaza Strip and grave humanitarian situation

In the Gaza Strip, the occupying Power continues with its policies and measures of the massive collective punishment of the civilian population held captive there under its illegal and immoral decade-long blockade. Two million civilians — children, women, men, older persons and sick persons — are trapped in this inhumane situation, suffering from a dire socioeconomic and humanitarian crisis deliberately caused by the occupying Power that is affecting every single aspect of life in Gaza.

In addition, the occupying Power continues to routinely carry out military aggressions against Gaza. In the recent period, this has included the launching of several air strikes, killing 5 Palestinians, including 2 children, and injuring 65.

Israeli occupying forces also continue to target Palestinian fisherman with gunfire from Israeli navy boats, endangering their lives, as evidenced yet again in the killing of Ismael Saleh Abu Reyala on 26 February, placing them in a constant state of fear, and destroying the livelihoods of the families reliant on the fishing trade for their survival.

Settlement activities

Israel has been equally unrelenting in its illegal colonization practices, with settlement and wall construction continuing unabated throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territory and particularly in and around Occupied East Jerusalem. As the occupying Power builds and expands more illegal settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, which constitute not only grave

breaches of the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War (Fourth Geneva Convention) and blatant disrespect of the July 2004 Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice, but also constitute war crimes as defined by the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, it also continues with its illegal, repressive and punitive practice of home demolitions, devastating countless Palestinian families and leaving them homeless and hopeless.

On 25 February 2018, the so-called "Israeli ministerial committee for legislation" approved a bill barring Palestinians from appealing directly, particularly with regard to settlements constructed on private Palestinian land, to the so-called Israeli Supreme Court.

On 21 February 2018, Israeli occupying forces razed lands in Palestinian villages surrounding Janin and Al-Khalil (Hebron), to clear the way for the building of a section of Israel's annexation wall around the illegal Israeli settlement of "Shaked", which in effect will leave the Palestinian civilians in Janin-area towns with no road to connect them with their lands from the northern side of the villages. In addition, the expansion of Israel's wall in the area will result in the confiscation of more than 1,000 dunums (247 acres) of lands belonging to Palestinians from Janin-area towns such as Yaabad and Nazlat al-Sheikh Zaid.

On 21 February 2018, occupying forces demolished a Palestinian house, agricultural structure and a commercial structure in the Shufat and Beit Hanina neighbourhoods of Occupied East Jerusalem.

In Al-Khalil (Hebron), Israeli bulldozers razed six dunums (1.5 acres) of agricultural lands in the village of Baqa'a in the eastern Al-Khalil (Hebron). The lands are located near a road that leads to the illegal Israeli settlement of "Qiryat Arba", home to a group of fanatical, extremist Israeli settlers who continue to terrorize the Palestinian civilian population in the area.

On 15 February 2018, Israeli occupying forces demolished two Palestinian homes in Al-Khalil (Hebron) under the pretext of unpermitted construction.

Israeli occupying forces also continue to routinely and cruelly demolish internationally funded schools and other humanitarian projects. The destructive impact of such Israeli violations on Palestinian communities and on the situation on the ground is immense, as reflected in the deteriorating socioeconomic and humanitarian conditions and deepening anger and frustration among the Palestinian civilian population living under this occupation of more than half a century.

In this regard, we must recall that the forced displacement or transfer of civilians by the occupying Power, the destruction of civilian properties and acts of collective punishment against the civilian population under its occupation all constitute breaches of the Fourth Geneva Convention. Israel must be held accountable for all such crimes, without exception.

Prisoners/detainees

At the same time, Israel, the occupying Power, continues its violent arrest and detention raids throughout the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem. Palestinian civilians are being detained daily, with young men and boys especially targeted by the occupying forces, who routinely assault, humiliate and severely abuse, including torture, Palestinian civilians arbitrarily arrested or detained.

Since 12 February alone, 377 Palestinians have been jailed or detained by occupying forces. We call for this illegal practice to end and for Israel to release the approximately 7,000 Palestinian prisoners, in particular the more than 300 children,

that it continues to hold captive in its prisons and detention centres in contravention of the Fourth Geneva Convention.

The destructive impact of the above-mentioned Israeli violations — and the thousands upon thousands of other daily violations and crimes being perpetrated against the Palestinian people under this illegal occupation — is immense, as reflected in rising tensions, the deteriorating socioeconomic and humanitarian conditions, and deepening anger and frustration among the population. Defenceless Palestinian civilians in the Occupied State of Palestine are living in constant fear as hopes for an end to Israel's half-century military occupation and for a peaceful settlement are rapidly fading.

We must thus repeat today our appeal to the international community to provide protection for the Palestinian people, as a matter of urgency and in accordance with international humanitarian law. We also continue to call upon the international community, including the Security Council, to act in line with their legal obligations and commitments to compel a halt to all illegal Israeli policies and practices in the Occupied State of Palestine, including in East Jerusalem. Israel must be held fully accountable in accordance with international law and the principles of justice for all of its violations and for its continuing obstruction of peace, otherwise it will never change course and will continue to act with the brazen impunity and contempt it is so arrogantly displaying.

The Security Council in particular must immediately act to uphold its duties under the Charter of the United Nations and implement its own resolutions, including resolution 2334 (2016), in order to alleviate the hardships facing the Palestinian people and to salvage the prospects for actually realizing a just and peaceful solution that can finally bring an end to this injustice and allow the Palestinian people to finally live in freedom and dignity in their own independent State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital, side by side with all of their neighbours.

This letter is in follow-up to our 625 previous letters regarding the ongoing crisis in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, which constitutes the territory of the State of Palestine. Those letters, dated from 29 September 2000 (A/55/432-S/2000/921) to 2 March 2018 (A/ES-10/768-S/2018/180) constitute a basic record of the crimes being committed by Israel, the occupying Power, against the Palestinian people since September 2000. For all of these war crimes, acts of State terrorism and systematic human rights violations being committed against the Palestinian people, Israel, the occupying Power, must be held accountable and the perpetrators be brought to justice.

I should be grateful if you would arrange to have the text of the present letter distributed as a document of the tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly, under agenda item 5, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Riyad **Mansour**
Ambassador, Permanent Observer
of the State of Palestine to the United Nations